

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ex-Park Tudor coach Kyle Cox sentenced to 14 years in sexting case

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Those close to Kyle Cox knew one of two men, federal prosecutor Kristina Korobov told a packed Downtown Indianapolis courtroom Friday.

One was an upstanding family man and former Park Tudor basketball coach who was seen as a mentor and educator to his students.

The other was a predator. A wolf. A man who used his position to manipulate the students who looked up to him, sometimes in pursuit of a relationship, other times to cover his tracks.

Though Cox admitted guilt and apologized for his actions in court during his plea for the minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, U.S. District Judge Larry J. McKinney agreed with Korobov's portrayal. McKinney instead sentenced Cox to 14 years behind bars — the term prosecutors sought.

"You decide what you want, and then you decide to take it from a source that is least able to defend itself," McKinney said. "Who is more vulnerable, as I've already said, than teenage kids?"

Ex-Park Tudor coach Kyle Cox agrees to plead guilty in sexting case

Cox was a basketball coach at Park Tudor when he coerced a 15-year-old female student into exchanging sexually explicit messages via text and Snapchat, authorities say. Cox carried on the inappropriate relationship with the girl for several months, authorities say. He pleaded guilty in May to a charge of coercion or enticement.

As part of that deal, prosecutors said they wouldn't seek a sentence of more than 14 years, and Cox said he wouldn't seek fewer than 10.

According to court documents, the girl's father discovered the messages and reported them to school officials just days before the girl had agreed to meet Cox at his home for sex last

December.

Cox resigned and signed a confidentiality agreement with the school. According to an initial complaint filed against Cox, he tried to persuade the girl to take the blame and say that she had taken Cox's iPad from his office and planted the explicit messages on it.

The criminal complaint also said Cox texted a male student the day after signing the confidentiality agreement that everyone was supporting him, saying: "the nice thing is that I can get any job in the state ... I've positioned myself to be marketable."

Cox is a 2002 graduate of Blue River High School. He played basketball and golf at Ball State University, where he graduated.

During his appeal for a lighter sentence, Cox expressed remorse for his actions.

"I am truly sorry for causing pain," he said. "There is not a day that passes that I do not feel an enormous amount of shame for my actions."

Cox also admitted that he lost family and relationships "that I may never reclaim," adding: "Words cannot express the amount of remorse and regret I feel for my actions."

Jim Voyles, Cox's lead defense attorney, said his client's acceptance of punishment should have been grounds for the lightest punishment, a prison term that, he added, was already lengthy. Voyles said Cox has been psychologically evaluated and has received regular counseling.

"He knows he's going to prison," Voyles said. "He's accepted that. He understands that."

Voyles said 47 people wrote letters to the court asking to speak on Cox's behalf at his sentencing, adding that the description in the letters "paints a picture of a wonderful young man."

But prosecutors disagreed with that characterization. They said it's just more proof that Cox wore two faces: his public persona and his private one.

Said Korobov: "This is a defendant who deliberately wore deceptive masks, so all these people who wrote letters for him" couldn't see his private persona.

While outlining her case Friday, Korobov also spoke of relationships Cox allegedly had with other students that had not previously been made public. Beginning in 2010, she said, Cox

carried on illicit relationships with two other students, ages 17 and 18, a sign of a pattern of inappropriate behavior.

Cox also admitted to having these additional relationships.

Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Detective Darin Odier, who worked in the cybercrimes division, also disputed Cox's claims of remorse.

Odier was asked by prosecutors at the sentencing hearing whether there was any evidence that Cox attempted to accept responsibility.

"No," Odier said. "It was always about his self-preservation at the expense of minor victim one."

McKinney did not have to follow the prosecution's recommended sentence and could have imposed one as severe as life in prison. He said he weighed a number of factors in his decision, including Cox's position as a coach and mentor at Park Tudor, and his use of a computer in his crimes. Using a computer, McKinney said, makes the enticement more effective and easier to perform.

The scandal roiled the exclusive private Indianapolis school when it broke earlier this year.

Park Tudor later came under scrutiny for the administration's handling of the allegations. The federal complaint hinted that administrators might have hindered the police investigation and not followed proper reporting procedures mandated in cases of alleged child abuse.

The head of school, Matthew D. Miller, committed suicide in January, before the allegations were made public.

In a lengthy statement to the Park Tudor community, interim Head of School Peter Kraft called the additional inappropriate relationships discussed during Friday's hearing "troubling."

"... our thoughts and prayers are with everyone affected by this situation," Kraft wrote.

"However, Park Tudor's commitment to our students and our community is unchanged: we continue to reexamine and strengthen our policies, procedures, training, and monitoring to ensure that all students on our campus are safe."

U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler declined to comment at length about Park Tudor's handling of the case.

"We'll save that for another day," Minkler told reporters outside the federal courthouse. "Right now, we have concluded the case against Mr. Cox. Park Tudor has been very cooperative with the government in the prosecution of Mr. Cox.

"They have certainly taken an awful lot of steps to change the pattern and practices at Park Tudor. We're going to take all of that into consideration and decide what needs to be done with Park Tudor."

After Friday's hearing, Cox was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service. It's unclear where he will be incarcerated; Minkler said that decision was under review by the Bureau of Prisons. Cox will need to serve 85 percent of his sentence.

After Cox leaves prison, he must serve 15 years of supervised release.

IndyStar reporters Marisa Kwiatkowski and Madeline Buckley contributed to this story.

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Officials, parents frustrated with Park Tudor's handling of Kyle Cox probe

Ex-Park Tudor coach Kyle Cox joked about violence against alleged victim, prosecutors say